

Emergency Responder

WASHINGTON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DIVISION



WASHINGTON MILITARY DEPARTMENT

July - August 2004



Gov. Gary Locke announced the Washington's new enhanced hazard mitigation plan in a July 7 press conference with (l-r) John Pennington, Region 10 director of the Federal Emergency Agency (FEMA) ; Maj. Gen. Timothy Lowenberg, director of the state's Military Department; and Mark Kahley, resource protection division manager for the state Department of Natural Resources. (FEMA photo)

Washington becomes nation's first state to receive federal approval of enhanced hazard mitigation plan

Washington is the first state in the nation to have its enhanced hazard mitigation plan approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

In a July 7 press conference Gov. Gary Locke announced the plan "will help communities throughout the state plan for and respond to disasters. By doing so, we can help spare individuals and families from the heartbreak of losing their homes, as well as injury and even death."

John Pennington, regional director of FEMA, said the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 required state and tribal governments to plan for potential hazards, with the specific intent of defining actions that will save lives and protect property. "The state of Washington was able to complete this task before the November 1, 2004, deadline and at an enhanced level," he said.

Washington's enhanced hazard mitigation plan will result in four main benefits to the state. They include:

- Increased Hazard Mitigation Grant Program funds following a disaster. States with enhanced hazard mitigation plans can receive funds of up to 20 percent of federal Stafford Act expenditures on a disaster. States with a standard plan are only eligible for 7.5 percent funding.
- Continued eligibility for permanent repair and restoration work for disaster-caused damage to public facilities such as schools, municipal water systems and fire stations.
- Continued eligibility for fire management assistance grants to help the Department of Natural Resources and local agencies. These grants pay for the

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EMD coordinates EMAC for Hurricane Charley

Hurricane Charley gave Washington another opportunity to perform its role as national coordinator for the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC).

Prompted by the reports of Charley's landfall in southwest Florida, Washington Emergency Management Division's (EMD) coordination team for EMAC swung into action by 10 a.m. Aug. 13 to handle requests for assistance.

Terry Egan, manager of EMD's Mitigation, Analysis and Planning Unit, said the EMD group dispatched a team of three Kentucky emergency managers to Florida to work directly with the state on assistance requests for resources under the compact.

A request for a four-person compact liaison team to work in the National Emergency Operations Center in Washington, D.C., was filled with personnel from Iowa, Alabama, and New Mexico.

These two teams coordinated the dispatch to Florida of medical personnel, fire trucks, helicopters, and emergency manager response and recovery experts, said Egan.

By Aug. 27, a record 291 emergency services personnel from 26 states had been sent to Florida under EMAC.

Egan said out state will turn over its EMAC coordination role to New York on Sept. 11, adding that EMD had begun its national coordination role in 2003 by filling aid requests for states hit by Hurricane Isabel.

"Our coordination role gave EMD the experience of working with major disasters and will help us to upgrade the state's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan," said Egan.

Washington's enhanced hazard mitigation plan

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costs of fighting wildfires that threaten lives, property, critical facilities, and watersheds, and are beyond the response capabilities of state and local governments.

- Continued eligibility for Flood Mitigation Assistance and Pre-Disaster Mitigation programs. Since 1988, the Flood Mitigation Assistance Program has provided nearly \$1.5 million in federal and match funds to help the state and local communities reduce flood damage.

"Having an enhanced plan demonstrates the state's commitment to a comprehensive hazard mitigation program beyond what can be accomplished through the federal mitigation programs," Locke said. "Our plan will help communities throughout the state plan for and respond to disasters."

NW WARN network starts in Washington state

Federal, state and local government agencies along with the private sector announced the start in mid-July of the Northwest Warning and Alert and Response Notification (NWWARN) system in central Puget Sound.

The NWWARN system, modeled on a response network in the Dallas region, will be part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Information Network (HSIN) program, which is comprised of a network of information sharing systems such as NWWARN and the Joint Regional Information Exchange System (JRIES).

HSIN is a counter-terrorism communications program founded in conjunction with state and local governments, counter-terrorism authorities, and law enforcement agencies. Adopted by DHS at the request of state and local partners, HSIN provides real-time collaboration and advanced analytic capabilities.

HSIN is used in the DHS Homeland Security Operations Center and is part of the wider DHS information sharing and collaboration with U.S. states, territories and major urban areas.

NWWARN will provide the notifications and alerts through wireless telephones, email, facsimile or text pagers. Although the system initially involves central Puget Sound, plans call for eventual expansion to the entire Northwest. The web-based information system can be accessed via the Internet at www.nwwarn.gov.

Wireless firms adding automatic caller location

Washington's 12 wireless phone companies have begun to provide their customers with automatic caller location in longitude and latitude that in many cases is accurate within 50 to 300 meters.

The automatic caller location service is part of a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) 1997 order that established a two-phase plan to provide Automatic Number Identification (ANI) and Automatic Location Identification (ALI) service on all wireless phones.

Wireless Phase I service, which has been implemented in all 39 Washington counties, allows a wireless 911 call to automatically display the wireless phone's call back number and the location of the cell tower from which the call originated at the 911 call taker's work station.

Wireless Phase II requires that wireless service carriers must provide more precise location (the longitude and latitude) information, within 50 to 300 meters in many cases. Wireless ALI is a critical service since too often wireless 911 callers are unable to provide the location from which they are calling or the caller is unable to speak. Implementation of wireless Phase II technology must take place within six months of a PSAP request but not later than Dec. 31, 2005.

Currently, 33 counties have requested Phase II service, and 12 counties have implemented Phase II service.

Oregon commission okays Umatilla Depot incineration

An Oregon commission has given the go-ahead for the start of the incineration of chemical weapons at the Umatilla Chemical Depot.

The unanimous Aug. 13 vote of the Oregon Environmental Quality Commission was the final administrative hurdle for the start of the weapons incineration at the Depot.

However, it was not clear when the incineration actually will begin because of court challenges by opponents of the incineration and a final Depot review of operational procedures for the incineration.

A Multnomah County Circuit Judge Aug. 16 denied a request for an injunction to stop the incineration of weapons at the Depot, but the judge directed the opponents to take their request to the Oregon Court of Appeals, which already has a case pending concerning the Depot's planned weapons incineration.

Incineration opponents planned to try by the end of August to get the Oregon Court of Appeals to stop the incineration start-up.

The Umatilla Depot houses more than 7.4 million pounds of nerve and blister chemical agents. Approved for construction in 1997, the incinerator was finished in 2000. The incineration process overall will cost the federal government about \$2.4 billion.

Two receive APCO awards

Two state E911 Advisory Committee members received 2004 awards from the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO).

Chris Fischer, of the Valley Communications Center in Kent, was selected as APCO's Communications Center Director of the Year. She also was presented with the Weldon Joe Blair award for outstanding service to APCO by a long-term member.

Peggy Fouts, E911 Manager, Grays Harbor County, was presented the Maurice Courtright Award for her contributions to APCO's Washington chapter.

Washington initiates new Amber Alert portal system

After joining the states of Oregon, Montana and Oklahoma in July to announce the launch of a new Amber 911 system, Washington successfully used it in an Aug. 19 amber alert for a baby girl in the Seattle area.

Washington's August alert ended with the recovery of the girl about 90 minutes after the alert was launched.

The new AMBER Alert 911 technology notifies thousands of subscribers via email, cell phones, pagers and other devices within minutes. This is critical element since statistics show that 74 percent of abducted children who are murdered are dead within three hours of the abduction.

The AMBER Alert 911 Web portal — <www.amberalert911.com> — enables law enforcement to swiftly distribute information about an abducted child and the suspected perpetrator to other law enforcement agencies, the media, members of the public and other stakeholders.

Principal developer of the portal is the AMBER Alert Web Portal Consortium, a public/private partnership of states, law enforcement, the broadcast media and private corporations. Private corporations sponsorships cover operational costs, thus making the system available to states, law enforcement, broadcast media and the public at no cost.

Members of the public and media can go to Amber web portal to sign up to receive AMBER Alert notifications.

The AMBER Alert 911 portal also features ongoing educational initiatives regarding the dangers of child abductions and the most effective ways to safeguard children.

The Washington State Patrol manages the Washington AMBER Alert 911 portal.



This flare-up on the Pot Peak fire in Chelan County dramatized the extreme fire conditions created by drought, wind and high temperatures across much of Washington's forest and range land in the summer of 2004. (US Forest Service photo)

Washington encounters tough wildfire season in 2004

Primed by hot and dry early summer weather, Washington's forest and range land were hit by a series of wildfires that began in mid-July.

Although state officials said water supply conditions were adequate across the state, the hot and dry spring and summer weather made forest and range land ready for major fires by early July.

Lightning strikes on June 19 and 26 in the mountains south and west of Lake Chelan ignited the state's largest group of fires — the Pot Peak/Sisi Ridge Complex. By late August, the complex's three major fires had blackened more than 47,400 acres and was mostly contained. The fires had destroyed three structures and threatened 175 others. Pot Peak/Sisi Ridge Complex fire costs totaled more than \$25 million.

The Washington Emergency Management Division, meanwhile, had activated four times by mid-August to support the Washington State Patrol's implementation of the State Fire Services Resources Mobilization Plan. These mobilization fires were:

- **Beebe Fire.** The human-caused fire broke out about 5 a.m. July 4 near Beebe in Douglas County about four miles east of Chelan. The fire mobilization order was approved at 5:18 p.m. July 4 after the fire had burned an estimated 1,000 acres and threatened two subdivisions. The fire was contained at 6 p.m. July 9 after burning 4,205 acres.

- **Elk Heights Fire.** A fire mobilization order was approved at 5:15 p.m. July 30 for this arson-caused fire that threatened as many as 200 residences and structures along Interstate 90 about 10 miles west of Ellensburg in Kittitas County. Two residences and one outbuilding were destroyed in the fire. The fire mobilization ended at 5:30 p.m. Aug. 3 after the blaze had blackened 358 acres.

- **Mill Canyon Fire.** At 7 p.m. Aug. 2, a fire mobilization was declared for a wildfire that threatened as many as 25 residences and several thousand acres

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Washington faces tough 2004 wildfire season

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of wheat in the Mill Creek area about 10 miles northeast of Davenport in Lincoln County. Residents from 12 homes were evacuated as a safety precaution. At 4 p.m. Aug. 6, the fire mobilization ended after 1,100 acres had burned. The cause of the fire remained under investigation.

• **Mud Lake Fire.** The Washington Fire Mobilization Act was declared at 7:45 p.m. Aug. 11 for the Mud Lake Fire which started about 2 p.m. Aug. 9 about seven miles northwest of Naches in Yakima County. The fire threatened about 45 homes, and a federal Fire Management Assistance declaration was approved Aug. 12 for the fire. The fire mobilization ended at 6 p.m. Aug. 13 after about 4,000 acres of grass, brush and scattered timber had been burned. The cause of the fire was under investigation.

• **Fischer Fire.** State Patrol Chief Lowell Porter authorized a fire mobilization at 12:01 a.m. Aug. 11 for the human-caused Fischer Fire which threatened residences and structures near Dryden in Chelan County about seven miles east of Leavenworth. The fire, which began about 7 p.m. Aug. 8, destroyed one home and damaged a residence and an outbuilding. Evacuation alerts and orders were issued for 455 residences, and a federal Fire Management Assistance declaration was approved Aug. 11. The fire mobilization act was ended at midnight Aug. 23 after the fire had covered 16,422 acres.

Emergency Management Division staff news

William Whobrey was honored July 29 for his outstanding volunteer service as a radio technician and emergency worker from February 1991 through June 2004. As a volunteer, his service to the Emergency Management Division and the state of Washington has been an invaluable resource during exercises and events such as the Nisqually Earthquake of 2001.

Fernando M. Llamas Jr. received a certificate of appreciation July 29 for his exceptional performance while volunteering through the Ready Corps as a Geographic Information System Technician. His project work centered on building the foundation of a geographic information system that supports homeland security, as well as natural and technological disasters.

Ron Crooks, who retired in June 2002 after working for 11 years in the Emergency Management Division's radiological instrument program, facility maintenance and search and rescue coordinator positions, passed away July 23. A memorial service was held July 30 in Boise, Idaho.

Fran Cunningham, who had worked eight years as a project employee in the Emergency Management Division's Recovery section, retired July 31. She had overseen hundreds public assistance project contracts arising from the state's eight federal disasters between 1996 and 2004.

John Ufford, who started with EMD in 2003 as an emergency management program coordinator in the Hazard Mitigation Section of the Mitigation, Analysis and Plans (MAP) Unit, has been named Transportation Security Program Manager in the MAP unit effective Sept. 1.

Kyle Herman began work Aug. 30 in the secretary administrative position in the Preparedness Unit. He previously worked with the state Department of Corrections.

Karen Cleveland joined the Programs and Training Section of the Preparedness Unit as a secretary senior on July 31. She previously worked for the state Department of Corrections at the Criminal Justice Center in Tacoma.

Lorri Gifford was named E911 technical financial coordinator in the E911 Unit. An EMD employee since 1998, Gifford had served as program assistant and as a temporary program coordinator in E911.

Blessing Guillermo was selected as program assistant in the E911 Unit. Guillermo, who formerly was the administrative assistant to the division director, has been with EMD since June 1998.

Disaster update: Nisqually earthquake, 2003 floods

Work continues on public assistance projects to rebuild and repair public facilities from two presidentially-declared disasters.

October 2003 Floods (1499):

- \$3.6 million of damages have been found eligible for federal and state assistance with funding obligated as of July 29, 2004.

- Ten applicants have been closed.

- In July, four appeals were submitted to FEMA. These appeals total \$469,840 for work that had previously been determined to be ineligible.

Nisqually Earthquake Disaster of Feb. 28, 2001, 1361-DR-WA:

- \$86 million of damages have been funded for federal and state assistance as of July 29, 2004.

- 263 applicants have been closed. 80 applicants remain open.

- Appeal Status: Three appeals totaling \$2.6 million in disputed eligibility costs.



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The Washington Emergency Management Division, including the State Emergency Operations Center, is located in Building 20 on Camp Murray, located at exit 122 on Interstate 5 south of Tacoma,